THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) to (c) The proposal for release of a commemorative postage stamp on late Shri P.S. Varier, the founder of 'Kottakkal Arya Vaidya Sala', was placed before the Philatelic Advisory Committee at its meeting held on 03.09.2001. The Committee has recommended the proposal for a commemorative stamp on the centenary of Kottakkal Arya Vaidya Sala for inclusion in the Stamp Issue Programme of the year 2002. The design of the stamp, which will incorporate a picture of Shri P.S. Varier, is under processing. The date of release will be finalised in consultation with the sponsor.

(d) It requires about six months from designing of the stamps to its release as the various stages of proofing, printing, distribution etc. are involved.

Regulation of courier operators

2641. SHRI C. P. THIRUNAVUKKARASU: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to bring amendments in the Indian Post Office Act, 1898 and Sea Customs Act to bring Private courier operators under these regulations;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the private courier operators are regulated by any other legislation at present;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether the Postal Department is facing challenge from private courier operators; and

(f) if so, the steps taken by the Department to meet the challenge?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) and (b) Sea Customs Act is not

administered by the Department of Posts. Comprehensive amendments are intended in the Indian Post Office Act, 1898, to update its provisions, and ensure that all players in postal sector are subjected to the same discipline.

(c) There is no legislation regulating the couriers.

(d) Does not arise in view of (c) above.

(e) and (f) Department of Posts is the principal service provider in the postal sector and in order to modernise its services and enhance customer satisfaction it has taken steps such as:

(a) expansion of Speed Post network;

(b) introduction of new products and services;

(c) computerisation of counter services;

(d) restructuring of delivery system;

(e) computerisation of mail sorting and other functions; and

(f) on line track and trace facility for premium products.

V.P.T. by private basic services operators

2642. SHRI C.P. THIRUNAVUKKARASU: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited has received a request for help from the private basic service operators in fulfilling Village Public Telephone;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The private basic service operators have requested for concession such as reduction in leased line tariff, handing over traffic